

Marketing research for Turku Skydiving Club (Turun Laskuvarjourheilijat)

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The purpose of this project was to find market opportunities for Turku Skydiving Club (TurunLaskuvarjourheilijat, further TLU) which offers a number of skydiving courses in Turku. Nowadays skydiving is both a popular hobby and an extreme sport. Skydiving means exiting an aircraft and returning to the ground with the help of parachute. Skydiving is performed as a recreational activity and sport, and also for deployment of military airborne forces. Depending on the height it may or may not involve a certain time of free-fall, during which the parachute has not been deployed yet and the body gradually accelerates to terminal velocity. Acrobatic maneuvers can be performed by skydiver during the free fall. There was no information about the demand for such an extreme entertainment in the Finnish market and consumers' attitudes towards skydiving. Marketing research was necessary to estimate the potential demand and consumers' thoughts about this extreme sport. This project is a quantitative research study that used a survey for gathering the necessary information. The results of this project provided the author with information about the demand in the market for recreational skydiving. The findings of this research can be further used by TLU to develop a consumer marketing plan.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

During the last few years the author has been taking skydiving courses at Turku Skydiving Club (TurunLaskuvarjourheilijatOy, further TLU). At the moment there is a discussion among TLU members about changing the current aircraft to a newer and larger one so that it can move with a higher speed and take in more people. So, looking to the future, it means that the club will need to attract new members. A market research is needed to find out about the demand in the market and consumer attitudes towards skydiving. In order to find market opportunities for TLU a method of survey will be used. The results of this project can be further used by TLU to make a consumer marketing plan.

Today extreme sports and particularly skydiving are becoming more and more popular. Skydiving means exiting an aircraft and returning to the ground with the help of parachute. Depending on the height it may or may not involve a certain time of free-fall, during which the parachute has not been deployed yet and the body gradually accelerates to terminal velocity. Acrobatic maneuvers can be performed by skydiver during the free fall. Skydiving is performed as a recreational activity and sport, as well as for deployment of military airborne forces. Over the years the activity has grown in popularity and now it is a fun activity with extreme nature that people can take part in.

The modern history of skydiving starts with Jacques Garnerin from France who made successful parachute jumps from a hot-air balloon in 1797. When the airplane was invented, it became possible to parachute from a faster-moving mechanical device and make skydiving more spectacular. After World War II the art of skydiving started to transform from a novelty act to an actual sport. The returning soldiers enjoyed the skydiving aspect and had the courage to attempt freefall. The soldiers also engaged in competitions when they returned home, and thus it led to skydiving becoming a sport. The first commercial purpose skydiving schools started to appear around 1957. Nowadays skydiving is both a popular hobby and an extreme sport.

1.2 Aim of the study and research questions

The objective of this study is to find market opportunities for TLU. The author wants to find out about the demand in the market and consumer attitudes towards skydiving.

The research questions are:

1. What are the market opportunities for TLU?
2. What are the potential consumers' attitudes towards the skydiving?

The results of the study can be used for writing a future marketing plan for TLU.

1.3 Limitations

This marketing research study considers general population of Turku area. However, the target market for TLU can be wider, when taking into account population of the nearby cities and special groups like professional skydivers, both domestic and international.

1.4 Definition of terms

Skydiving – the sport of parachute jumping, in which participants perform maneuvers before opening the parachute and attempt to land accurately (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>).

Freefall – the fall of a body within the atmosphere without a drag-producing device such as a parachute (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>).

Bodyflight, or 'body flight', is the art of 'flying your body' in a controlled manner. This includes turns, rolls, lateral movement, fall rate control, and other acrobatics in the air (<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/>).

Parachute is a device used to slow the motion of an object through an atmosphere by creating drag. (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>)

Canopy – a parachute itself, as opposed to the parachute system as a whole. (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>)

"**Marketing research** is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information - information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor

marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues, designs the methods for collecting information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyzes, and communicates the findings and their implications."(Alan T. Shao, 1999 p.6)

Marketing research is the systematic and objective planning, gathering, recording, and analyzing of information to enhance the decision making of marketing managers (American Marketing Association (AMA) - Official Definition of Marketing Research).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Market opportunities

According to Philip Kotler (1997, pp.130-133), one of the major reasons for conducting marketing research is to identify market opportunities. A company should evaluate each opportunity before choosing its target markets.

There are several types of markets which can be measured. A *market* is the set of all actual and potential buyers of a product (Kotler, 1997, p.131). Thus, it means that the size of the market is the number of buyers who might exist for a particular market offer.



Figure 1. Classification of markets. Source: Philip Kotler. *Marketing Management*, 2003

The *potential market* is the set of consumers who show a sufficient level of interest in a defined market offer.

Nevertheless, consumer interest is not enough to define a market. Potential consumers must have enough income for the product and have access to the product offer. If the product is not distributed in certain areas, potential consumers in those areas are not available to the marketers. The *available market* is the set of consumers who have interest, income, and access to a particular market offer.

For some market offers, sales may be restricted to certain groups. For example, motor-cycle can't be sold to anyone less than 18 years of age. The remaining adults constitute the *qualified available market* – the set of consumers who have interest, income, access, and qualification for the particular market offer.

The *target market* (also called the *served market*) is the part of the qualified available market the company decides to pursue.

Then the company is selling to a certain number of buyers in its target market. The *penetrated market* is the set of consumers who have already bought the company's product.

If the company is not satisfied with the current sales, it can take a number of actions:

- It can try to attract a larger percentage of buyers from its target market
- It can lower the qualifications of potential buyers
- It can expand its available market by widening distribution area or lowering its price
- It can try to expand the potential market by advertising the product to less interested consumers or ones not previously targeted

2.2 Services

2.2.1 Characteristics of services

Services do not belong to one group of products. Nevertheless, there are some general characteristics that can describe many service products. According to Brassington (2003), these characteristics differentiate services from physical goods.



Figure 2. Characteristics of service markets. Source: Frances Brassington. Principles of marketing, 2003.

Lack of ownership

The most obvious aspect of service is that there is no transfer of ownership. Therefore, the access, use or experience of the service often has specific time and type of usage and is subject to contractual terms and conditions.

Intangibility

The senses of touch, smell, sight and taste assist consumers in their decision-making process. With service products it is more difficult to examine what is on offer because the service experience can only happen after the decision has been made. The service

experience is intangible and is delivered after the customer is committed to the purchase.

Perishability

Services are produced at the same time as they are consumed. In other words, a service cannot be stored either before or after experience, because manufacture and consumption are simultaneous.

Inseparability

Due to involvement of customer in service experience, it cannot be produced beforehand and stored. Therefore the service delivery is not separable from service providers as customer often comes into direct contact with them. The delivery of personal service can be controlled, because there are fewer opportunities of outside interference, but it is more complex when other customers experience service at the same time.

Heterogeneity

Simultaneous production and consumption and the involvement of service staff and other customers makes it difficult to standardize the service experience as planned. Therefore, heterogeneity means that each service experience is likely to be different, depending on the interaction of customers and staff and other factors such as time, location and the operating procedures.

Each characteristic creates problems and marketing requirements. It needs marketing efforts to find ways to make the service more tangible, to increase the productivity of providers who are inseparable of their products, to standardize the quality to balance the variability and to improve demand movements and supply capacities to control perishability.

2.2.2 Services marketing management

Traditionally the product marketing mix consists of 4Ps. However, service products require additional elements to explain the special characteristics of service marketing

(Brassington, 2003). These are People, Physical evidence and Processes. All these extra marketing mix elements greatly influence the customer's service experience.

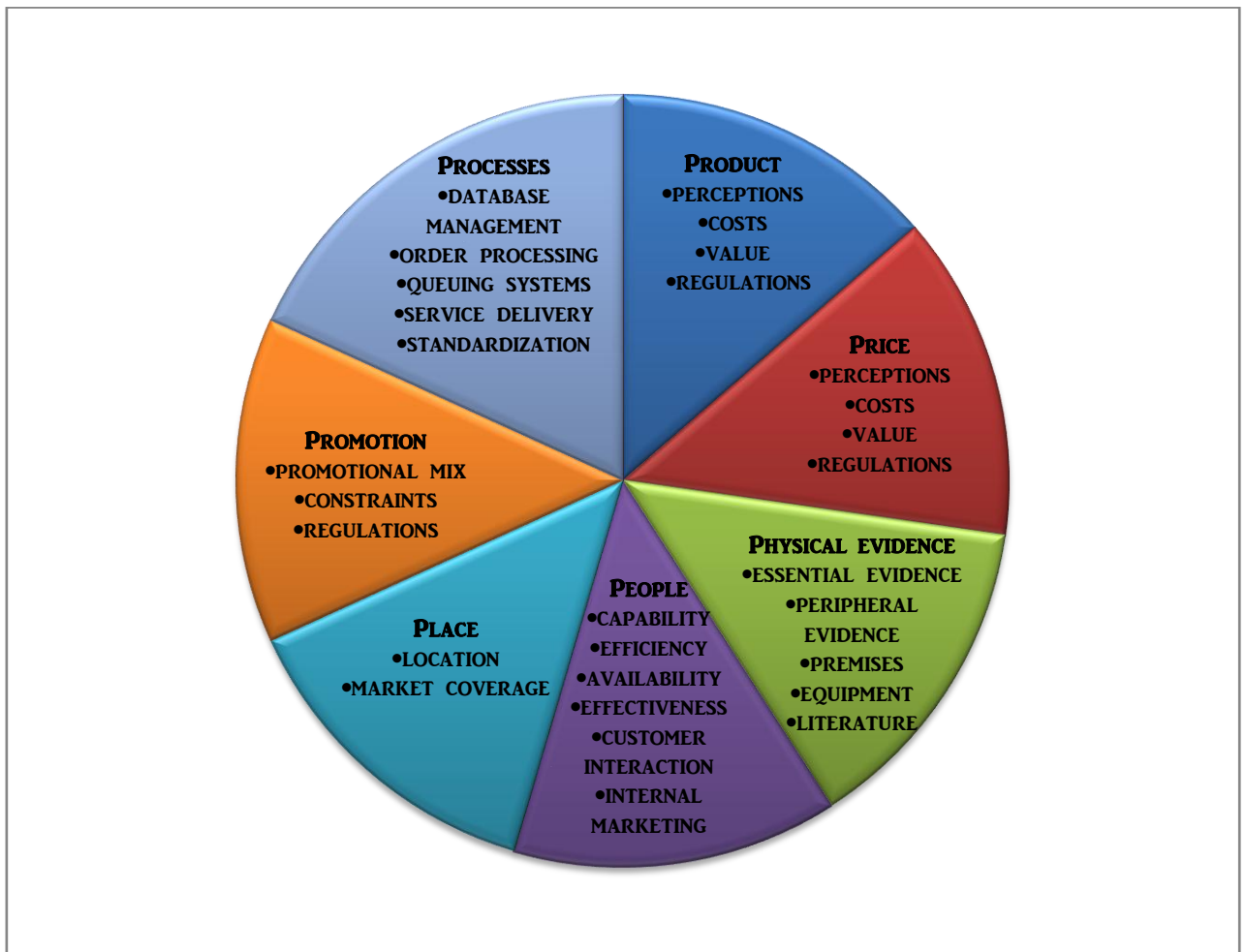


Figure 3. The services marketing mix. Source: Frances Brassington. *Principles of marketing*, 2003.

Product

Services can be treated like any other physical product in a number of ways. Supplier can develop a range of products, each of which represents profit earning opportunities. Also these products can be grouped into product lines based on similarities and differences between them. Other physical product concepts such as positioning, branding, developing a mix, designing new services and managing the product lifecycle are relevant.

Price

Due to the intangible nature of services, their pricing can be very difficult to set and justify. The customer cannot physically touch or experience the product, so it is hard for them to evaluate the benefits they have gained by buying it. Sometimes prices of servic-

es are regulated not by the service provider but rather by national authorities. Other service providers are free to regulate prices by themselves. However, it can be very difficult to determine the true cost of provision. It is connected with complications of determining the cost of professional or specialist skills as well as different time and efforts required to deliver a service to different customers. The pricing of professional services is also affected by perishability. By varying the price, service providers can encourage or discourage customers from buying a service, depending on the busiest periods.

Place

Services are often supplied direct from the provider to the customer because production and consumption are simultaneous. Thus, direct supply allows the provider control the process; to differentiate through personal service; and to get feedback and interaction with customer. But it can also cause problems for service provider, such as limit the quantity of customers that can be served and geographic area of the service.

Promotion

Service products are particularly difficult to communicate because of their intangibility. Therefore, the service product itself cannot be shown in advertisement. However, they can show physical evidence, show people who are already enjoying the service and highlight the benefits of it. One of the most effective tools in advertizing services can be testimonials from satisfied customers, reassuring the potential customer in the positive outcome of the service. Word of mouth communication is also very important for building a reputation for quality, reliability and trustworthiness.

People

Service very much depends on the interaction of people including service providers and customers. The staff should be able to reliably deliver the service according to the required standard and be consistent with the image of organization. This is called internal marketing. A customer as a participant also takes part in creation and delivery of a service, which is known as interactive marketing.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence brings a number of tangible elements supporting the service delivery and symbolizes its intangible benefits. According to Shostack (1977) there is a differ-

ence between essential evidence and peripheral evidence. Essential evidence is a core equipment of service (such as a newness of aircraft operated by skydiving club) and customer purchase decision mostly depends on it. Peripheral evidence is less important to the service delivery and can include items that customer can keep or use.

Processes

The production of service is vital for its marketing as the customer either witnesses it or is directly involved in it. That is why the service provider needs to create smooth and efficient customer-friendly procedures.

Summarizing the points above, to some extent managing services is more complicated than managing products. While products can be standardized, to standardize a service is a far more difficult task as there are more factors involved - people, physical evidence, and processes.

2.3 Extreme sports

Individual sports and outdoor activities, like base-jumping, rock climbing, parasailing, mountain biking, skydiving, snowboarding and others that contain a certain degree of risk have become increasingly popular in the 1990s.

Robinson (1992) argued that risk sport activities differ from traditional sport activities by posing elements of real or perceived physical danger within a context of outcome uncertainty. He also defined the risk sports "as a variety of self-initiated activities that generally occur in natural environment settings and that, due to their always uncertain and potentially harmful nature, provide the opportunity for intense cognitive and affective involvement" (p. 53).

2.4 Turku Skydiving Club (TLU)

First skydiving jumps in Turku were made in 1968 in Turku airport. In 1972 skydivers set up their own association which was registered in 1973 under the name of Turun-Laskuvarjourheilijatry abbreviated as TLU.

2.4.1 Skydive jump

Skydiving is the sport of jumping from an aircraft and performing acrobatic maneuvers in the air during free fall before landing by parachute (Google Dictionary). It can be done both as a recreational activity and a competitive sport.

At skydiving airport operates one or more aircrafts that take groups of skydivers up for a fee. Normally jump involves skydivers exiting an aircraft (usually an airplane, but sometimes a helicopter or even the gondola of a balloon), at any height from 1,000 to 4,000 meters altitude. Skydiver can manipulate the shape of the body in freefall, to generate turns, forward motion, backwards motion, and sideways motion and even lift. If jumping from 1000 meters altitude, the parachute is deployed immediately, however, at higher altitudes, the skydiver may free-fall for a short period of time (up to one minute from 4000 meters) before activating a parachute to slow the landing down to safe speeds which takes about 5 to 10 minutes.

Once the parachute is open (usually the parachute will be fully inflated by 800 meters) the jumper can control the direction and speed of movement with toggles on the ends of steering lines attached to the trailing edge of the parachute, and can aim for the landing area and come to a relatively gentle stop by pulling the toggles all the way down.

Many people prefer to make their first jump with an experienced and trained instructor – this type of skydive is called a tandem skydive. During the tandem jump the instructor is responsible for controlling the flight and steering the parachute, and therefore the student can fully concentrate on learning to skydive. Other skydiving courses include Static line, IAD (Instructor Assisted Deployment), and AFF (Accelerated Free fall).

Skydiving gives possibility to try flying without any assistive devices. During the free-fall one can move in three dimensions by changing the position of body. There is no feeling of falling because the distance to the ground is so big. Skydivers also experience flying together in groups. For many skydivers parachute is just a device that enables them to jump and fly.

According to Finnish Civil Aviation Authority regulations the training should take place in clubs. The theory course lasts for a few days. In addition to theory part, students also go through training on hanging harness to learn using reserve parachute and the right position during the free-fall.

Skydiving is a general term that includes several sub-types. When the parachute is open one can practice the accuracy jumps aiming to hit two centimeters diameter on the finish line. A canopy formation is a formation built by parachutists by flying their parachutes in proximity to each other and then taking grips on other jumpers' parachutes. Novelty is a canopy piloting, when skydiver turns into a rotating dive dramatically increasing the canopy's speed, then stops the canopy's rotation on the proper course heading and flies straight very close to the ground on the marked area. Freefall jumps include formation skydiving, freestyle and freeflying. Recently also wingsuit flying has grown in popularity. A special suit adds more surface area between legs and under arms to the human body and results in a significant increase in lift. International level competitions are held in all of these skydiving types, and it shows that they belong to top-level sports.

2.4.2 Skydiving courses offered at TLU

TLU is equipped with modern square parachutes made of technically advanced materials and specifically designed to allow the student jumper to steer the canopy to the landing area. A special radio attached to the jumper's helmet is often used to coach the student and assist in the landing of the parachute.

Static line (Pakkolaukaisukurssi)

A **static line** descent can be made after 4 days of theoretical on ground training and involves the student jumper leaving the aircraft at 1000 meters. The main parachute is deployed with the help of a device called a 'static line'. This is a length of webbing attached to the aircraft at one end and the bag, in which the main parachute is kept, at the other, as the jumper falls away from the aircraft, the static line pulls the main parachute out and begins the deployment. During the first jumps student learns how to exit the plane keeping the right body position. Once the student has mastered the required skills, he can continue training with series of free-fall jumps.

Accelerated Freefall, AFF (NOVA-kurssi)

AFF (Accelerated Freefall) is an intensive course, more expensive but allowing fast progression in skydiving. The first descent can also be made after 4 days of theoretical on ground training, like in a static line course. The descent is done from 4000 meters accompanied by two highly specialized instructors who will guide the student in freefall using hand signals and under canopy using radio communication. The student will experience 40-50 seconds of freefall before opening his own canopy at about 1500 meters.

Tandem

Tandem jump is not a course but a quick and easy introduction to free-fall. A dual harness system is used for the jump. Student is securely attached to an experienced tandem instructor who is in charge of opening the parachute and landing safely. The preparation for the jump takes only about half an hour, during which the student will get all the necessary instructions to carry out a safe jump. Free from responsibility, one can relax and enjoy the skydive knowing that there is a qualified instructor who takes care of the process.

Student and instructor exit the aircraft from around 4000 meters, experiencing up to 50 seconds of freefall. At 1500 meters, the instructor deploys a huge ram-air parachute designed for two. Tandem parachuting also allows disabled people to experience the thrill of skydiving.

2.4.3 Statistics

This statistics section represents preliminary research information that was gained from existing TLU member lists. The total number of TLU customers is 578, out of which 269 jumped in tandem and 309 took the skydiving course.

Looking at age distribution figure, one can see that the three columns with higher percentages represent groups of people aged 20-35. Thus, this is the age range when a person is most likely to engage in skydiving sport.

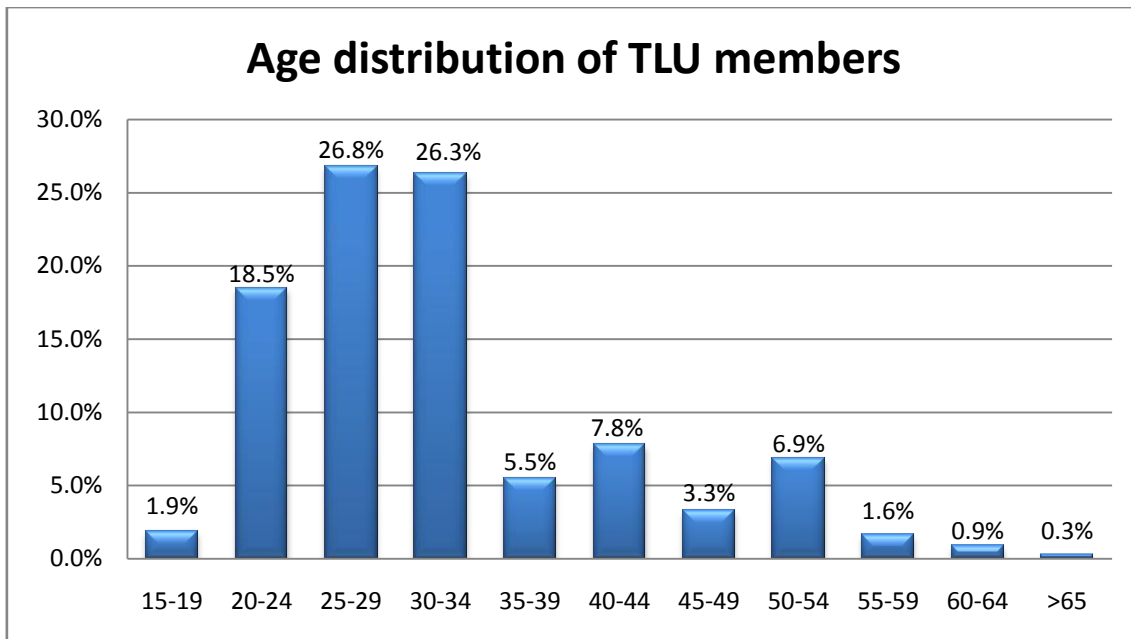


Figure 4. Age distribution of TLU members. Source: TLU archives 2011

The gender distribution figure shows that the percentage of male skydivers (78%) is significantly higher compared to female skydivers (22%).

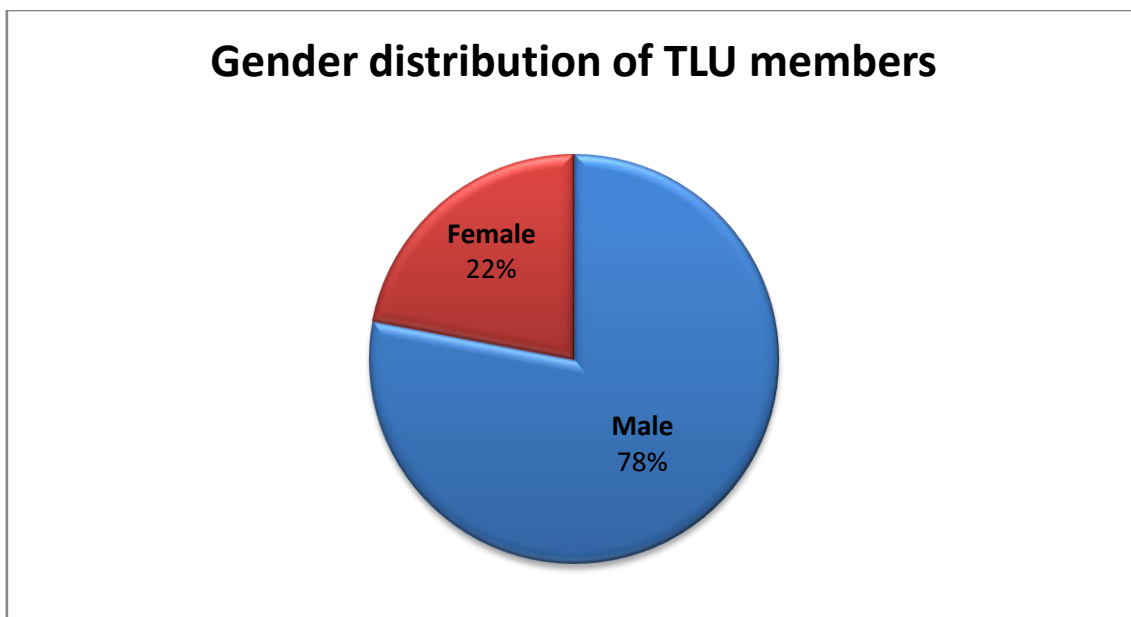


Figure 5. Gender distribution of TLU members. TLU archives 2011

Thus, it can be concluded that the most active age for starting skydiving is from 20 to 35 years old and the clear majority of skydivers are males.

2.4.4 Skydiving restrictions

Skydiving does not have any special requirements, but a good fitness level to reduce the risk of injury. Use of spectacles during the jumps is allowed. Certain medications can interfere with skydiving, as well as drug and alcohol use. The general restrictions for skydiving are:

Minimum age. To make a skydive jump a person must be at least 15 years old. People under 18 must have their parent's or guardian's written permission.

Maximum age. People over 60 years of age must obtain a medical certificate every five years. Analysis of statistics indicates that incident rates tend to increase as student jumpers get older. This may be due to slowing reaction times and sometimes less acute senses.

Weight limits are introduced for safety reasons. Big weight in principle is not an obstacle, but the very maximum weight for skydiving is 100 kilogram.

Health restrictions also apply. Doctor's certificate is needed if the person is over 60 years old or has had one of the following conditions: epilepsy, fits, severe head injury, recurrent blackouts or giddiness, disease of the brain or nervous system, high blood pressure, heart or lung disease, dislocated shoulder, recurrent weakness or dislocation of any limb, previous fractures, diabetes, mental illness, drug or alcohol addiction.

Skydiving restrictions will be further used to determine the target population for Turku Skydiving Club as well as help to choose the survey sample.

2.5 Maslow's hierarchy of needs and skydiving

Abraham Maslow explained why people are driven by particular needs at particular times. He questioned why one person spends much time and energy on personal safety and another person on gaining the esteem of others. Maslow thought that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, from the most pressing to the least pressing. In his model

lower-level needs such as psychological requirements and safety must be satisfied before higher-level needs such as self-actualization are pursued. According to this hierarchical model, when a need is mostly satisfied it no longer motivates and the next higher need takes its place.

“Extreme sport experience does involve an intense fear. However, rather than let the influence of fear take control of the situation the extreme sport participant continues to undertake their chosen sport. That is extreme sport participants face these intense fears, accept that control of the future is not always possible and move through these fears to undertake an action. It would seem that by taking this action despite the intense fears a person moves towards a greater understanding of self” (Brymer, 2005).

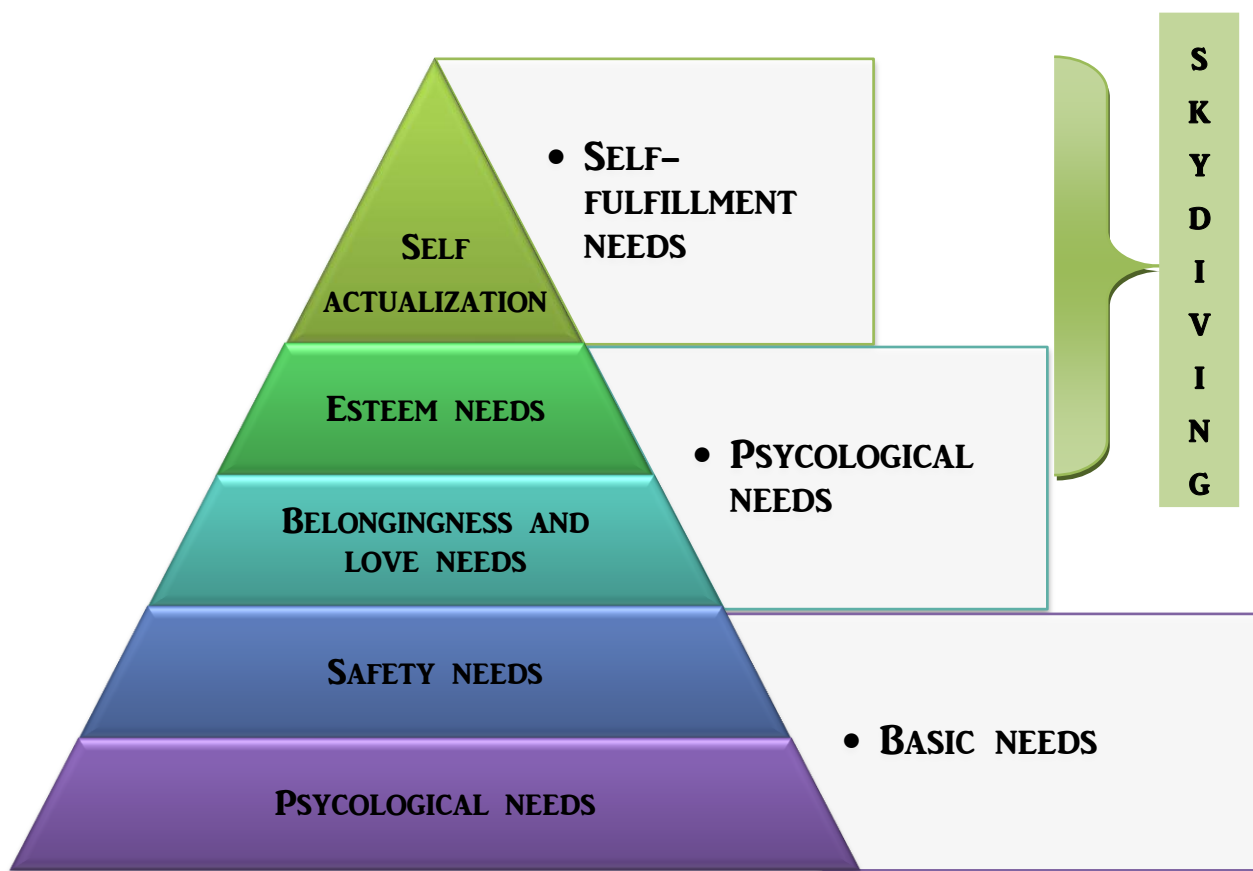


Figure 6. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Thus, skydiving sport stands on the top of the needs pyramid as it is related to both esteem needs and self-actualization. And according to this hierarchy, the need for enriching experiences is the last in the list of the human needs to satisfy, which makes the marketing of skydiving more complicated.

2.6 Economic offerings and consumer price index

B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore argue that there are four types of economic offerings: commodity, goods, services and experiences. Commodities are materials that can be found from the nature, such as vegetables, minerals. Goods are made using commodities and are sold to anonymous customers. Services are intangible and are individually customized for every customer. Experience is different from other types by the fact that it engages customers in a memorable way. Skydiving is a pure experience. It fulfills the eternal dream of all humans – a dream to fly up in the air without use of any aircrafts.

Consumer price index (CPI) is "a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services."(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). According to CPI statistics, with the time the CPI for commodities increases less than that for goods, which increases less than CPI for services, which in turn increases less than the CPI for the experiences. Thus, we can see a trend of shift in consumer demand from commodities to goods to services and most recently to experiences.

2.6.1 Household expenditure trends in Finland

The following table shows statistical information on Finnish household expenditure. It can be seen that the amount of money spent on “recreation and culture” and “miscellaneous goods and services” was gradually growing through the years and their weight together was about 20 percent of total expenditure. The slight decrease of this trend can be seen in 2008-2009 due to the financial crisis that occurred during those years.

Table 1. Finnish household expenditure. Source: <http://www.stat.fi>

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Housing and energy	25.3	25.2	25.0	24.7	24.9	26.7
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	12.2	12.1	11.9	12.0	12.4	13.0
Recreation and culture	11.5	11.7	12.1	12.2	11.9	11.6

Transport	12.5	12.7	12.4	11.7	11.7	10.2
Hotels, cafés and restaurants	6.6	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.5
Furnishings, household equipment	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.2
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	5.5	5.2	5.1	5.0	4.9	5.2
Clothing and footwear	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.0
Health	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6
Communications	3.3	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.2
Education	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Miscellaneous goods and services	8.6	8.6	9.3	10.0	9.9	9.4
Total consumption expenditure	100	100	100	100	100	100

2.7 The city of Turku

2.7.1 Demographics

Table 2 describes the population of Turku by age and sex in 2010. The total number of Turku residents is 177 326. The market for skydiving includes both males and females aged 16-60. By taking half of people from age groups 15-24 and 45-64 and the whole group aged 25-44, we can calculate the number of customers that could potentially be interested in skydiving: $26458/2 + 45542/2 + 50157 = 86000$ customers.

Table 2. Population of Turku by age and sex in 2010. Source: <http://www.stat.fi>

Age Sex	Total	0 – 14	15 – 24	25 – 44	45 – 64	65 –
Both sexes	177326	23008	26458	50157	45542	32161
Men	83829	11895	12563	25529	21474	12368
Women	93497	11113	13895	24628	24068	19793

These figures will be further used in discussion to determine market opportunities, the size of potential and available markets for skydiving.

2.8 Competitors

Other extreme sport providers can be considered as competitors for TLU. The following sports are available in Turku:

- 1) Rock-climbing (Kiipeilypalatsi Turku, <http://www.kiipeilypalatsi.com>)

Rock-climbing is one of the most popular extreme activities in Finland. It is a sport where a person needs to climb up either a natural rock formation or artificial rock walls. The advantage of rock-climbing is a possibility to climb all year round – on natural rocks during the warm season and in climbing hall during winter time. This is the biggest competitor of Turku skydiving Club, as many people in Finland do rock-climbing.

- 2) Canoeing (River Aura Information Centre, <http://www.aurajoki.net>)

- 3) Bungee jumping

There is no local organization in Turku offering bungee jumping. Although several bungee jumps per year are organized as one-time events. The two organizers of such events in Finland are Xon-puisto (<http://www.xonpuisto.com>) and Skybreakers (<http://www.skybreakers.com>).

The research about competitors showed that the choice of extreme activities in Turku is very limited. The winter extreme sport are excluded from the list, because they are seasonal and don't overlap with skydiving, which is a summer sport. Rock-climbing should be considered the biggest competitor, as it is possible to climb all year round. Also, it is a highly popular sport in Finland.

2.9 SWOT analyses

Table 3. SWOT analyses for Turku Skydiving Club

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unique extreme experience• Fulfills a dream of humans to fly• Relatively new and continuously developing sport
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High cost of skydiving• Needs large advertising budget• Seasonal sport

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-of mouth marketing • Marketing research • Organization of international events • Cooperation with companies and educational institutions
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other extreme sports competitors • Lack of customers, resulting in lack of funds and inability to keep and to service the aircraft • Unstable economical situation

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Secondary data

The secondary data for this study was gained using both internal and external data. The internal sources consisted of information covering previous research and statistics of current TLU members was provided by Turku Skydiving Club. The external data was obtained mainly from internet resources such as websites providing population statistics, parachuting organizations and skydiving clubs.

3.2 Primary data

To find out about customers' attitudes and opinions as well as their awareness and knowledge about skydiving the primary data was gathered. The primary research was a quantitative research which was done in the form of survey. The responses from target population were collected in the streets in the city of Turku. The survey was conducted in four parts at different times and in different parts of the city. The author interviewed people face-to-face, ensuring that respondents didn't have trouble understanding questions. It also added to the validity of the survey, as the interviewer could personally identify and approach the target population. The questionnaire used was structured and the questions were both open-ended and close-ended with given response alternatives.

3.3 Target population

The target population was chosen according to skydiving restrictions and existing statistics of the current TLU members. It included males and females from 16 to 60 years old living in Turku area.

3.4 Questionnaire

In order to obtain an overall view of the potential customers' opinions of the skydiving sport they were given a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 13 questions designed to investigate respondents' attitudes and thoughts about skydiving in general and also find out about their background (See Appendix 1).

The questionnaire used was structured. Most of the questions were close-ended, giving the response alternatives to choose from. The two questions about skydiving price estimations were open-ended. The author interviewed people face-to-face, ensuring that respondents didn't have trouble understanding the questions.

The goal of the first 5 questions and the question number 8 is to find out how familiar the respondent is with skydiving and whether he has some interest to know more and maybe try to skydive in future. Questions from 6 and 7 discover the motives of respondents for willingness and unwillingness to skydive. The answers to question 9 tell about the most unknown facts about skydiving. The two following questions 10-11 test how the respondents estimate the costs of skydiving. The last questions 12-13 measure gender, age, income and educational level of respondents.

3.5 The marketing research process

According to Alan T. Shao (1999, p.61), the marketing research process consists of the following seven steps:

Step 1: Define the problem or opportunity

This initial step is the most important, because the whole process will depend on it.

If the definition is not well thought-out and clearly formulated, then managers can end-up solving a wrong problem.



Figure 7. Steps of the marketing research process. Alan T. Shao. Marketing research: an aid to decision making, 1999

To define a problem or opportunity effectively, researchers must consider the following points: 1) the reasons for pursuing information, 2) what is already known about the issue, 3) the risks associated with the problem or opportunity, 4) recourses available for the research activity, and 5) how the information will help the decision-maker.

Step 2: State the research objectives

After defining the problem or opportunity researchers can determine research objectives. Objectives should be consistent with definition and focus on what information is needed in order to solve the problem.

Step 3: Develop a research design

An effective research design does the two things: 1) provides answers to questions as accurately and objectively as possible; and 2) controls possible sources of errors.

Research designs can be classified as either exploratory or conclusive. Often exploratory research is a first step in doing conclusive research.

Exploratory research identifies problems, generates hypotheses, and gains insights into particular subjects. The characteristics of exploratory research: small-scale in nature, costs are relatively low, tend to be flexible, may be carried out in several ways, findings tend to be inconclusive. The findings are preliminary and are usually followed by descriptive or causal investigations.

Conclusive research provides specific information that helps in evaluating different courses of action. The data obtained with conclusive research is specific and decisive, since much is already known about the topic being studied. Descriptive and causal researches are two types of conclusive research.

Descriptive research describes attitudes, perceptions, characteristics, activities, and situations. These studies can describe the behavior of targeted consumers, characteristics of customers, or the market potential for specific products. Descriptive research builds on previous information; representative samples are required; research plan is structured; requires substantial resources; findings are conclusive.

Causal research seeks to find causes and their effects. It provides evidence that a cause-and-effect relationship exists or does not exist. Here are the conditions distinguishing causal research from other types of research: logical time sequence (cause must precede or occur simultaneously with the effect), concomitant variation (extent to which the cause and effect vary together as hypothesized), control for other possible causal factors.

Step 4: Prepare for data collection

The researcher must think where he or she will get the information. The data can already exist as a secondary data – the data that has already been collected for the purpose other than the current study – or it can be primary data – original data gathered to satisfy the purpose of the current study. When gathering primary information, marketers need to understand how to choose a sample of population as well as how the data will be gathered and how to design a questionnaire.

Qualitative data is information gathered from a small sample of target population to understand their feelings and get insights. Quantitative data is information gathered from many members of the target population and can be projected to represent the target population.

Step 5: Collect the data

Information can be gathered in different ways, including personal interviews; telephone, mail, or computer-assisted surveys. Choosing the appropriate technique for a particular study depends on such factors as budget; time frame; demographics of the respondents; transportation needs; product demonstration needs; survey content, length, and structure; desired response; desired sampling precision; and the percentage of people in the general population who have the characteristics being studied.

Step 6: Analyze the data

Analyses makes sense of the data so that marketing decision makers can draw conclusions about the question being studied. The researchers must code and edit the information, and after that it is ready to be analyzed. The complexity of the analyses depends on how the information was gathered, how detailed are the desired results, and the expertise of the marketing researcher.

Step 7: Write and present the research report

After the data has been collected and analyzed, a written report covering the entire research project is usually prepared. The report should summarize all of the steps in the study. It allows the reader to understand the research problem or opportunity, the design of the study, and conclusions drawn from the research effort. Finally, the research presents realistic recommendations based on the results of the study.

3.5.1 Applying the steps of marketing research to the study

The purpose of this project was to find out about market opportunities for Turku Skydiving Club (TurunLaskuvarjourheilijat, further TLU) which offers a number of skydiving courses in Turku. TLU needed to develop a marketing plan and attract new customers. The problem was that there was no information about the demand for such an extreme entertainment in the Finnish market and consumers' attitudes towards skydiving. The objective of this research was to estimate the potential demand and consumers' thoughts about this extreme sport.

The design of this study is descriptive. It describes the behavior of targeted consumers, characteristics of customers, or the market potential for specific product - skydiving. The research builds on the previous information and its results are conclusive.

The secondary data was collected using both internal and external data. The internal sources of Turku Skydiving Club consisted of information covering previous research and statistics of current TLU members. The external data was obtained mainly from internet resources such as websites providing population statistics, websites of parachuting organizations and skydiving clubs.

Nevertheless, the main source of information for this study was primary data. This project is a quantitative research study that used a survey for gathering the necessary information. The responses from target population were collected on the streets in the city of Turku. The survey was conducted in four parts at different times and in different parts of the city. The author interviewed people face-to-face, ensuring that respondents didn't have trouble understanding the questions. It also added to the validity of the survey, as the interviewer could personally identify and approach the target population. The questionnaire used was structured and the questions were both open-ended and close-ended with given response alternatives.

The target population was chosen according to skydiving restrictions and existing statistics of the current TLU members. It included males and females from 16 to 60 years old living in Turku area.

The sample selected to participate in the study consisted of 105 people. These people were chosen according to their age (and thus ability and interest to engage in extreme sports) and geographical area where they lived. The sampling method used in the study was non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling does not use chance selection procedures but rather rely on the personal judgment of the researcher (Malhotra, 2007).

Once the survey data was collected it was analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS. The program is used by researchers to perform various statistical analyses, such as descriptive statistics, bivariate statistics, and prediction for numerical outcomes for identifying groups. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data in this study.

4 RESULTS

The total number of surveyed people was 105, out of which 55 were females and 50 were males. The age of respondents varied from 16 to 65 years, while the majority of respondents belonged to the age range from 19 to 49 years old.

Table 4. Crosstabulation Age –Gender of respondents

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Age	16-18	0	6	6
	19-25	32	15	47
	26-35	14	22	36
	36-49	6	7	13
	50-65	3	0	3
Total		55	50	105

The researcher was interested in how many of the respondents knew about the fact that there is a skydiving club in Turku. 42.9% knew about this fact.

Table 6. Knowledge of the respondents about the existence of TLU

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	60	57.1	57.1	57.1
	Yes	45	42.9	42.9	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Further respondents were asked if they would like to try skydiving at some point in their life. The majority of 67.6 % answered to this question positively.

Table 5. Willingness of respondents to skydive

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	34	32.4	32.4	32.4
Valid Yes	71	67.6	67.6	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

When asked what course they would like to choose if any, the majority of respondents (41.9%) were willing to try skydiving once by choosing Tandem jump. 25.7 % wanted to take a full course, while 32.4 % said that they are not interested in skydiving.

Table 6. The choice of skydiving course

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Course	27	25.7	25.7	25.7
Valid None	34	32.4	32.4	58.1
Tandem	44	41.9	41.9	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The next question uncovered the motives of people who showed their interest in skydiving. A clear majority of 71.4 % said that they would like to skydive in order to experience extreme sensations. 7.6 % said that they had a dream to fly, 5.7 % were interested in skydiving because of their friends and relatives and 1.9 % saw skydiving on television.

Table 7. Motives of respondents to try skydiving

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Experience extreme	75	71.4	71.4	71.4
Have a dream to fly	8	7.6	7.6	79.0
Saw on TV	2	1.9	1.9	81.0
Friend/relative is a skydiver	6	5.7	5.7	86.7
None	14	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The motives of respondents not to try skydiving were much more varied. The highest percentages scored the three following factors: fear of heights (28.6 %), risking own life (29.5%) and cost of skydiving (28.6 %). 7.6 % said that they don't have time for skydiving and 1.9 % stated that it is not natural for human to skydive.

Table 8. Motives of respondents not to try skydiving

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fear of heights	30	28.6	28.6	28.6
Risking your life	31	29.5	29.5	58.1
Cost of skydiving	30	28.6	28.6	86.7
Lack of time	8	7.6	7.6	94.3
It is not natural	2	1.9	1.9	96.2
None	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The majority of respondents (48.6 %) were not interested to find out anything about skydiving. Out of all given alternatives the most important fact about skydiving for respondents turned out to be its cost. As many as 21.9 % of surveyed have chosen this answer. The next most popular answers were: the process 8.6 %, accidents and dangers 7.6 %, types of courses 6.7 % and how to skydive 6.7 %.

Table 9. Facts about skydiving that respondents would like to know

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The cost	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
Accidents and dangers	8	7.6	7.6	29.5
The process	9	8.6	8.6	38.1
Valid Types of courses	7	6.7	6.7	44.8
How to skydive	7	6.7	6.7	51.4
Nothing	51	48.6	48.6	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The next two questions tested the perception of respondents about skydiving costs. Firstly, the interview asked to estimate the skydiving course price. Most of the respondents (29.5 %) guessed that the price was between 300 and 500 euro and were almost right (the two of the offered courses at TLU cost 440 and 650 euro). Nevertheless, the estimate price of all respondents almost equally varied between 100 and 1000 euro.

Table 10. Skydiving course price estimation by respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
100-200	22	21.0	21.0	21.0
201-300	20	19.0	19.0	40.0
Valid 301-500	31	29.5	29.5	69.5
501-1000	26	24.8	24.8	94.3
1000-2000	6	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Then respondents were asked to estimate the price of a single jump from the airplane after the completion of skydiving course at TLU. Here the majority of 45.7 % answered that the price would be from 100 to 300 euro, although the real price is just 25 euro. The next alternative that scored 25.7 % of answers was that jump cost from 50 to 100 euro, which was also much higher than the real price. Only 17.1 % of respondents have chosen the right price range from 0 to 50 euro. Surprisingly 11.4 % of respondents thought that the price for one jump varies between 300 and 2000 euro.

Table 11. Skydive jump price estimation by respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-49	18	17.1	17.1	17.1
50-99	27	25.7	25.7	42.9
Valid 100-299	48	45.7	45.7	88.6
300-2000	12	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The results of the survey will be discussed in detail and analyzed in the next section.

5 DISCUSSION

Marketing research is the function linking the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information that is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems, to generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions, to monitor marketing performance, and to improve understanding of the marketing process. Marketing researchers specify the information needed to address marketing issues, design the method for collecting information, manage and implement the data collection process, analyze the results and communicate the findings and their implications (Kotler, 2005).

The purpose of this research was to find market opportunities for Turku Skydiving Club which offers a number of skydiving courses in Turku. There was no information about the demand for skydiving in the Finnish market and consumers' attitudes towards skydiving. TLU have not done any research before and also did not put much effort into marketing. The research was necessary to estimate the potential demand and consumers' thoughts about this extreme sport.

Skydiving experience belongs to services as it has all five characteristics of a service:

Lack of ownership: the access and experience of skydiving has specific time (normally daytime when there is light and the area can be clearly seen from the sky) and type of usage (one jumps with parachute out of the airplane)

Intangibility: skydiving experience is intangible and is delivered after the customer is committed to the purchase.

Perishability: skydiving service is produced at the same time as it is consumed. It cannot be stored either before or after experience.

Inseparability: skydiving service delivery is not separable from service providers as customer comes into direct contact with them (e.g. instructors).

Heterogeneity: each skydiving service experience is likely to be different, depending on the interaction of customers and staff and other factors such as time, location and the operating procedures.

According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, with the time the CPI for commodities increases less than that for goods, which increases less than CPI for services, which in turn increases less than the CPI for the experiences. Thus, we can see a trend of shift in consumer demand from commodities to goods to services and most recently to experiences.

On the other hand, Maslow's hierarchy of needs implies that one must satisfy basic needs before upper-level needs. When progressing up the ladder, the needs go as follows: from physiological, safety, belongingness, ego, needs, and to self-actualization. Skydiving sport stands on the top of the needs pyramid as it is related to both esteem needs and self-actualization (Brymer, 2005). And according to this hierarchy, the need for enriching experiences is the last in the list of the human needs to satisfy.

Nevertheless, the statistics of Finnish household expenditures ([Table 1](#)) show that the amount of money spent on "recreation and culture" and "miscellaneous goods and services" was gradually growing through the years and their weight together was about 20 percent of total expenditure. The slight decrease of this trend can be seen in 2008-2009 due to the financial crisis that occurred during those years. Finland is a developed European country with comparably high incomes, so most of the people have enough money to spend on entertainment.

The major reason for conducting this marketing research was to identify market opportunities for TLU. There are several types of markets which can be measured. The size of the market is the number of buyers who might exist for a particular market offer (Kotler, 1997, p.131).

The *market* or set of all actual and potential customers of TLU consists of both males and females from 16 to 60 years old who live in Turku area. As was roughly calculated from the Table 2 showing population statistics of Turku, the market for skydiving includes about 86000 customers.

The *potential market* for TLU has to be a set of customers who show a sufficient level of interest in skydiving. According to the survey results, the majority of 67.6 % answered that they would like to try skydiving. Thus, the potential market can be calculated as follows: $86000/100\% * 67.6\% = 58136$ customers.

The *available market* is the set of consumers who have interest, income, and access to skydive at TLU. Let us assume that income needed to be able to pay for skydiving should be at least over 1000 euro. Then the available market can be calculated by including half of the group with income 500-2000, and groups with higher income (See Table 12). First the respective percentage of surveyed population needs to be calculated $(35/2 + 9 + 4) * 100\% / 105 = 29\%$. So, the available market is $58136/100 * 29\% = 16859$.

Table 12. Income and wish to skydive crosstabulation

Count		Want to skydive		Total
		No	Yes	
Income	0-500	7	23	30
	500-2000	9	35	44
	2000-5000	16	9	25
	5000 and more	2	4	6
Total		34	71	105

The *qualified available market* is difficult to estimate, as here should be taken into consideration human physical conditions and health restrictions for skydiving.

The *target market* (also called the *served market*) is the part of the qualified available market that TLU should decide to pursue.

The *penetrated market* is the set of consumers who have already done skydiving at TLU. The current number of customers (both tandem and course students) is 578.

Further, the marketing mix elements for skydiving need to be discussed:

Product. The survey showed that well over 50% of respondents would like to try skydiving during their life. However, only 25.7 % wanted to do skydiving on a permanent basis and take a full training course. 41.9% said that they want to jump only once in tandem together with instructor. Many respondents could not decide between these two alternatives. They said that they do not have any perceptions on how it feels to skydive. Therefore they wanted to try Tandem first and if they like it then continue with taking a course. This fact once more proves the intangibility of skydiving.

The most common motive for trying skydiving turned out to be experience of extreme, and about 70% chose this alternative. The main reasons named for not doing skydiving were fear of heights, risking life and cost of skydiving. The first two reasons are natural fears of human being and it is very difficult to deal with them and to prove the safety of the process. But the perceptions of high cost of skydiving could potentially be changed.

Price. The answers of the respondents about estimation of course and single jump price show that they had no idea about what the real price should be. The answers varied from as low as 100 to as high as 2000 euro. All in all, respondents were mostly giving the price that was much higher than it really is. Furthermore, the cost of skydiving was also the most popular answer for question about facts that respondents wanted to find out about skydiving.

The price issues can be solved by introducing new product choices or discount systems. For example, giving discounts to students, groups, organizing corporate events; cooperating and advertizing with companies and universities. Some international skydiving clubs make 50% discount on the second tandem jump. By doing so they get people coming back for a second jump and get more involved into skydiver's way of life. Often people bring friends which then become new customers.

Static line theory course in TLU costs 440 euro. Afterwards each jump costs from 13 to 25 euro, depending on the height of exit from the aircraft. When taking more advanced AFF course, the most difficult part is to pay for the theory course and the first seven jumps. Nowadays in TLU it is possible to pay AFF course in two ways: 650 euro in-

cluding theory and the first jump (plus jumps number 2-3 150 euro each, plus jumps number 4-7 125 euro each) or 1250 euro including theory and all 7 jumps. After that each jump will cost only 25 euro. For many people (especially for students) it is hard to pay the initial amount at one time because it is a big sum of money. Some skydivers joke that they had to take a student loan to start skydiving at the time when they were university students. A solution could be to give customers a possibility to pay the whole price in parts during 3 to 6 month. When 1250 is divided by 3 month it will become 416 euro per month, or when divided by 6 it will be 208 euro per month.

Place. The number of customers for TLU is limited by geographical area of Turku, as almost every big city in Finland has its own skydiving club. What can be done is a good personal service and getting feedback and interaction with customer. It can give a lot of useful ideas for further marketing plan.

Promotion. Skydiving is difficult to communicate because of its intangibility. The customer survey showed that many people are unsure about how it feels to skydive, so it is difficult for them to make a purchase decision. In this case word of mouth communication could be the most valuable technique. It doesn't require big budget and at the same time is very effective. Also testimonials from satisfied customers can be used to reassure the potential customer in the positive outcome of the service. For example, a Facebook group could be used for this purpose.

People. It is true that service depends on the interaction of people including service providers and customers. The staff should be able to engage customers and make them interested to continue skydiving and bring their friends.

Physical evidence. In case of skydiving generally the only physical evidence that customers have left after the experience is a video tape or photos, which can be shared in various social networks.

Processes. TLU needs to create smooth and efficient procedures for a greater interaction with customers. Although the main experience of skydiving takes place up in the sky, the on ground experience also affects customers' perception of service.

Effectively managing the marketing mix for skydiving service will let TLU to spread more information about skydiving, solve the high price issue, promote the club itself, engage customers and reassure about the positive outcome of the service, and thus attract many new customers.

6 CONCLUSION

This marketing research showed that there are good market opportunities for TLU as many people are interested in skydiving sport. Putting aside the fear of heights and life risking, the biggest issue for most of people became the high cost of skydiving. This problem can be dealt with by introducing new product offerings and discount systems, using word-of-mouth communication and social networks and creating a valuable experience.

The researcher has found out that customers know very little about skydiving and more marketing effort should be done. Overall customer attitudes for skydiving were positive, especially for younger people. Thus, further marketing campaigns should mostly concentrate on the group of customers aged from 18 to 35.

The results of this project provided the author with information about the demand in the market for recreational skydiving and customer attitudes towards skydiving. The findings of this research can be further used by TLU to develop a consumer marketing plan.

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8 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE



Please put a check mark (✓) next to your chosen answer.

1. Have you ever skydived?

Yes	No
-----	----

2. If No, would you ever like to skydive?

Yes	No
-----	----

3. Would you like to jump in tandem or take a full course leading to license?

Tandem	Course
--------	--------

4. Did you know that there is a skydiving club in Turku (TurunLaskuvarjourheili-jat)?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Do you know anyone who has skydived?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. Out of the answers given, why would you like to skydive?

- a. To experience extreme
- b. I have a dream to fly
- c. Because I saw it on TV and liked it
- d. My friend/family member is a skydiver
- e. Nothing

7. Out of the answers given, what reason would you choose NOT to skydive?

- a. Fear of heights
- b. Risking your life
- c. Cost of skydiving
- d. Lack of time
- e. Nothing

8. Would you be interested in learning more about skydiving?

Yes	No
-----	----

9. If Yes, then what would you be interested in learning about skydiving?

- The cost
- Accidents and dangers
- The process
- Types of skydiving courses
- How to skydive
- Nothing

10. What do you think is the price of skydiving course? _____

11. What do you think is the price of one jump after you have finished the course?

12. Please check the appropriate answer box based on your gender and age:

Gender \ Age	Male	Female
16-18 years		
19-25 years		
26-35 years		
35-49 years		
50 years and more		

13. Based on your education level, what is your monthly income?

Education \ Income	None	School (Yläaste)	High school (Lukio)	Vocational school (Ammattikoulu)	Polytechnic degree (Ammattikorkeakoulu)	University degree (Yliopisto)
0-500 euro						
500-2000 euro						
2000-5000 euro						
5000 and more						